

Odd Facts**About Mexico**

Mexico is officially called "Estados Unidos Mexicanos" and "República Mexicana."

Mexico has an area of 767,290 square miles.

The greatest length of the country is, from northwest to southeast, 1,900 miles; its greatest width, 750 miles, and its least width a little short of 140 miles.

The outline of Mexico is sometimes compared to a huge cornucopia, with its opening toward the United States.

There are 4,574 miles of coast line on the Pacific side, including the Gulf of California.

The coast lines on the Gulf of Mexico measure about 1,400 miles, and there are 327 miles on the Caribbean Sea.

Surface

An immense elevated plateau, with a chain of mountains on its eastern and western margins, occupies the greater part of the country.

The "tierras calientes," or hot lands, are low plains lying along the coast on both sides of Mexico. This lowland region is in general thirty to forty miles in width, and very unhealthy.

The great plateau of Mexico is very largely of volcanic origin. The general elevation of the highest part of the plateau is about 8,000 feet, in the States of Mexico and Puebla.

The highest mountain peaks are the granite, snow-clad, extinct volcanoes, Popocatepetl (Smoking Mountain), 17,558 and 17,343 feet high, respectively. These peaks are about 20 miles southeast of Mexico City.

In the neighborhood of Mexico City the country is highly volcanic, and has a large number of extinct volcanoes and at least three that are active or semi-active.

Earthquakes are numerous throughout the Republic, especially on the western coast. Slight shocks or "temblores" are almost of daily occurrence.

Rivers

Mexico has no large rivers; only a few small streams flowing from the mountain slopes at the edge of the great plateau eastward to the Gulf and westward to the Pacific. Its peculiar surface formation, a high plateau shut in by mountain barriers and the narrow lowland region between it and the coast, does not permit the development of large river basins.

The Rio Grande del Norte, or Rio Bravo, on the northern frontier, is practically an American river, as it rises in American territory and receives very little water from the Mexican side.

The lakes are small and few. The six small lakes in the Valley of Mexico are probably the remains of a lake once occupying the whole valley, and are gradually disappearing.

Most of the ports on the Gulf coast are on small rivers obstructed by sandbars.

Tampico Harbor has been improved by breakwaters, or jetties, and deepening of the channel, so that it is safe and commodious.

Vera Cruz is an open anchorage inside of a series of reefs which afford no protection to the vessels from the "norther." This explains the dispatch of Admiral Fletcher describing his first landing of marines. He reported the landing was made "in the face of an approaching norther." The report suggests that this condition is still a source of danger.

Commerce

Coastwise trade is principally under the Mexican flag, but the steamers are owned abroad.

Imports were valued in 1910-11 at \$36,995,880, and the exports at \$147,451,965.

The imports largely consist of railway material, industrial machinery, cotton, woolen and linen textiles and yarns for national factories, hardware, furniture, building material, mining supplies, drugs and chemicals, wines and spirits, wheat, Indian corn, paper and military supplies and equipment.

The exports include gold, silver, copper, coffee, henequen or sisal, textile and other fibres, cabinet woods, chicle, rubber and other forest products, hides and skins, chickpeas, tobacco and sugar.

In the production of cane sugar, Mexico, compared with other countries, is 13th, with 120,000 tons; of rice, 16th, with 120,000,000 pounds; of tobacco, 14th, with 34,700,000 pounds; cotton, 7th, with 200,000 bales; wool, 4th, with 1,412,000 ounces; silver, 1st, with 87,000,000 ounces; coffee, 6th, with 68,638,000 pounds; copper, 2d, with 61,000 pounds; lead, 4th, with 124,000 tons.

Population

The population according to the most recent estimate is 15,063,207, giving an average of 19.6 inhabitants per square mile.

Less than 1-5 (19%) of the population is classed as whites, 38% is Indians, and 43% is mixed bloods, or mestizos.

Under the Constitution of 1834 all race distinctions were abolished, so that nominally all parts of the population are free and equal.

The Indians began in about 1866 to take an interest in public affairs, and soon began to make their influence felt.

It is the general conclusion that the Indians have been decreasing in number while the mixed bloods have been increasing.

The death rate among the Indian children is estimated at not less than 50%.

The unhealthfulness of the coastal plains prevents their being thickly populated, although Vera Cruz and some other States return a large population.

The Indian element in the population is made up of several distinct races—the Aztec or Mexica, Mixteca-Zapoteca, Maya or Yucateco, Otomi or Othomi, and in smaller number the Totonac, Tarasco, Apache, Matlatzinc, Chontal, Mixe, Zoque, Guicuro, Opatá-Pima, Tapulapa, Seri and Huastec.

No fewer than 51 distinct languages and 59 dialects have been found among the Indian inhabitants of Mexico.

Railways

The total mileage of railways is 15,251, and that of telegraph lines 46,112.

A concession was granted for the construction of a railway from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico in 1857. It was not completed until 1873.

This railway, the logical route of United States troops to the Mexican capital, is known as the "Ferrocarril Mexicano," and is celebrated because of the difficulties overcome on the precipitous eastern slopes of the Sierra Madre, the beauties of the mountain scenery through which it passes, and the rapid transition from the hot, humid coastal plain to the cool, arid plateau, 7,924 feet above the sea at Boca del Monte. The railway extends 264 miles between Vera Cruz and Mexico City. The line was capitalized at \$46,000,000, and has paid a good profit on the investment.

Actual railway construction did not begin until 1878, during the first term of President Porfirio Diaz.

The two railway lines running northward from the capital to the American frontier, popularly called the Mexican Central and the Mexican National, were merged in 1908 with an aggregate capital of \$160,000,000, Mexican money, of which the Mexican Government holds a controlling interest.

Mining

Mining is the most productive industry. Mines of some description are to be found in 26 of the 31 States and territories. There is also considerable production of coal, copper, and iron.

The most celebrated iron deposit is that of the Cerro del Mercado, in the outskirts of the city of Durango—a mountain 640 feet in height, 1,100 in breadth, and 4,800 in length, reputed to be almost a solid mass of iron.

The City of Mexico

Mexico City is 7,415 feet above sea level, and by rail 264 miles northwest of Vera Cruz.

With a wet, undrained subsoil, and many thousands of Indians and half-breeds living in crowded quarters, the death rate has been notoriously high—46 to 56 per thousand, though drainage works, underground sewers, and sanitation have tended to improve these conditions.

The city is laid out with almost unbroken regularity.

The name of a street changes with almost every block, according to old Spanish custom.

The Paseo de la Reforma, the finest avenue in the city, is a broad boulevard almost three miles long.

There were (1908) 353 government schools in the city, including 13 professional and technical schools, and nearly 200 private schools; a Geographical Society, a Geological Society, an Association of Engineers and Architects, and a Society of Natural History, also a National Library dedicated in 1892, of upwards of 225,000 volumes.

There are over 150 manufacturing establishments, including iron working shops.

WHAT HAS BROUGHT ABOUT THE PRESENT CONDITION OF AFFAIRS IN MEXICO?

This Page contains Facts about Mexico from the Great Article (50,000 words) in the new Encyclopaedia Britannica, which Covers in Great Detail, not only the Land and the People, the Resources, Finances and Institutions of the country, but the Political and Social Conditions from the Aboriginal Period to the Present Day, affording the Reader a Complete Grasp of the Conditions lying behind the troubles which have finally resulted in Armed Intervention by the United States.

Causes of the Present Revolution—The Privileged Classes Versus the People

"Thenceforward, the second election of Porfirio Diaz to the presidency in 1884, the history of Mexico is 'one of almost continuous warfare, in which Maximilian's empire is a mere episode. The conflicts, which may at first sight seem to be merely between rival generals, are seen upon closer examination to be mainly (1) between 'the privileged classes, i. e., the church and (at times) the army, and the mass of the other civilized population; (2) between Centralists and Federalists, the former being identical with the army, the church, and the supporters of despotism, while the latter represent the desire for republicanism and local self-government. Similar conflicts are exhibited, though less continuously, by most of the other Spanish-American states."

Did the Mexican Aborigines Come from Asia?

"The original peopling of America might then well date from the time when there was 'continuous land between it and Asia.' At all times communication has been open from East Asia, and even the South 'Sea Islands' to the west coast of America. The importance of this is evident when we consider that late in the nineteenth century Japanese junk still drifted over by the ocean current to California at the rate of about one a year, often with some of the crew still alive. Further north, the Aleutian Islands offer a line of easy sea passage, while in Northeast Asia, near Bering's Strait, live Chukchi tribes who carry on intercourse with the American side."

"Moreover, there are details of 'Mexican civilization which are most easily accounted for on the supposition that they were borrowed from Asia. They do not seem ancient enough to have to do with a remote Asiatic origin of the nations of America, but rather to be results of comparatively modern intercourse between Asia and America. Humboldt compared the Mexican calendar with that 'in use in Eastern Asia. The Mongols, Tibetans, Chinese, and other neighbouring nations have a cycle or series of twelve animals, viz., rat, bull, tiger, hare, dragon, serpent, horse, goat, ape, cock, dog, pig, which may possibly be an imitation of the ordinary Babylonian-Greek zodiac familiar to ourselves. The Mongolian peoples not only count their lunar months by these signs, but they reckon the successive days by them, rat-day, bull-day, tiger-day, &c., and also, by combining the twelve signs in rotation with the elements, they obtain a means of marking each year in the sixty-year cycle, as the wood-rat year, the fire-tiger year, &c. This method is highly artificial, and the reappearance of its 'principle in the Mexican and Central American calendar is suggestive of importation from Asia."

Agriculture in Mexico

"The agricultural resources of Mexico are large and unusually varied, as they comprise some of the cereals and other food products of the temperate zone, and most of the leading products of the tropics. Agriculture, however, received slight attention, owing to the early development of the mining industries. An indirect result of the industrial development of Mexico, which began during the last quarter of the 19th century, has been an increased interest in agriculture, and especially in undertakings requiring large investments of capital, such as coffee, sugar and rubber plantations."

Mixed Blood in Mexico

From the Encyclopaedia Britannica Article, MEXICO

"As the Spanish conquerors brought few women, 'there was much mixture of races. Among the pure whites—who were practically all of Spanish extraction—there were two well-defined classes, the Gachupines or chapetones, Spaniards born in Europe, said to be so named in allusion to their spurs, from Aztec words meaning 'prickers with the foot,' and the native-born or creoles; the former, though a small majority, had almost all the higher positions both in the public services and in commerce. Besides these there were five well-defined castes: mestizos (Indian and white); mulattoes (negro and white); Zambos (negro and Indian), who were regarded as specially vicious and dangerous; native Indians and negroes. But 'there were about a dozen intermediate named varieties,' of which the *sambo-atras* (tending away from white) and *tente en l'aire* (tending towards white) may be mentioned; and many of the last named eventually passed into the creole class, sometimes by the decree of a court. The fact that the trade route to Manila passed through Vera Cruz, Mexico City, and Acapulco entailed the settlement also of a few Chinese and Malays, chiefly on the Pacific coast."

Characteristics of the Native Population

"The native population of the plateau of Mexico, 'mainly Aztecs, may still be seen by thousands without any trace of mixture of European blood. Their stature is estimated to be about 5 ft. 3 in., but they are of muscular and sturdy build. Measurements of their skulls show them mesocephalic (index about 78), or intermediate between the dolichocephalic and brachycephalic types of mankind. The face is oval, with low forehead, high cheek-bones, long eyes sloping outward toward the temples, fleshy lips, nose wide and in some cases flattish, but in others aquiline, coarsely moulded features, with a stolid and gloomy expression. Thickness of skin, masking the muscles, has been thought the cause of a peculiar heaviness in the outlines of body and face; the complexion varies from yellow-brown to chocolate (about 40 to 43 in the anthropological scale); eyes black; straight coarse glossy black hair; beard and moustache scanty."

52 Dictators, Presidents and Rulers in 59 Years

From the Encyclopaedia Britannica Article, PORFIRIO DIAZ

His term of office marks a prominent change in the history of Mexico; from that date he at once forged ahead with financial and political reform, the scrupulous settlement of all national debts, the welding together of the peoples and tribes (there are 150 different Indian tribes) of his country, the establishment of railroads and telegraphs, and all this in a land which had been upheaved for a century with revolutions and bloodshed, and which had fifty-two dictators, presidents and rulers in fifty-nine years.

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Climate

Mexico stretches across 17 parallels of latitude, with the Tropic of Cancer crossing the territory about midway, thus placing it in the tropical and sub-tropical regions.

The great central plateau carries temperate and sub-tropical conditions over much the greater part of the Republic.

The temperature rises steadily as one descends to the lowlands on either side of the plateau, until the upper limit of the tropical region, called "tierras calientes," is reached, where the climate is hot, humid, and unhealthy, as elsewhere in the forested coastal plains of tropical America. Here the temperature often rises to 105°, and in the sultry districts of Vera Cruz, Guaymas and Acapulco to and even above 110°.

Above the plateau rise the marginal sierras, while a few isolated peaks in the region of perpetual snow give to Mexico a considerable area of cold temperature and a trace of arctic conditions.

The four seasons are clearly marked north of latitude 23° N. only. South of that parallel only a rainy season from May to October and a dry season for the rest of the year can be distinguished.

Long droughts are common in many parts of the country, and on the barren surface of the plateau the rains drain away rapidly.

Products of the Soil

"An important product of the 'plateau and of the open districts of the *tierras calientes*, 'growing in the most arid places, is the 'nopai' or prickly pear cactus. Its fruit, called 'tuna' by the natives, is refreshing and wholesome, and is a staple food in spite of its 'spiny covering."

"In the *tierras calientes* of Mexico, however, better conditions prevail. A fertile soil, abundant rainfall and high temperatures have covered these mountain slopes and lowlands with a wealth of vegetation. The problem for the agriculturist here is not irrigation but drainage and keeping down spontaneous growths."

"In these regions sugar, tobacco, indigo, cacao, rice, sweet potatoes, alfalfa, beans and cassava are produced, and Indian corn yields two and three crops a year."

"Fruits also are plentiful, both wild and cultivated. Among them are the banana, plantain, tuna, chili pepper, olive, coconut, nut, orange, lemon, lime, mango, pomegranate, 'plum' or pineapple (wild and cultivated), fig, aguacate, chirimoya, papaya, gourd, melon, guava, 'chuela' (plum), and the several 'zapote' fruits, including 'chico zapote' from the *Achras sapota*, which produces the 'chicle' or chicle-gum of commerce, 'zapote blanco,' 'zapote barracho' (or 'amarillo'), 'zapote prieto' (or 'negro') and 'zapote-maney.'"

Ants That Destroy Trees

"An interesting species is the 'leaf-cutting ant,' which lives in large underground colonies and feeds upon a fungus produced by leaf-cuttings stored in subterranean passages to promote fermentation. These ants will 'strip a tree in a few hours, and are very destructive to fruit plantations. Some of the native trees have developed ingenious methods of defence, one of which is that of attracting small colonies of another species to drive away the marauders."

"Most destructive, also, are the termites, or white ants, whose ravages are to be seen in the crumbling woodwork and furniture of all habitations in the hot zones. Some species build their nests in trees—great globular masses sometimes three feet in diameter, supported on the larger branches, and connected with the ground by covered passages on the outside of the tree. These insects are blind and avoid the light. Bees find a highly congenial habitat in Mexico, and some honey is exported. Spiders are also represented by a large number of genera and species, the most dreaded being the venomous 'tarantula' and the savage 'mygalé.'"

Insects

"The insect fauna of Mexico covers a very wide range of genera and species which, like the other forms of animal life, is largely made up of migratory types. To the traveller, the most conspicuous among the Mexican insects, perhaps, are the butterflies, beetles, ants and the myriads of mosquitoes, midges, fleas and chinchies. Among the mosquitoes, which are extraordinarily numerous in some of the lowland districts, are 'the species credited with the spread of malarial and yellow fevers. The midges are even more numerous than the mosquitoes. In pleasing contrast to such pests are the butterflies of all sizes and colors, beetles of an inconceivable variety of size, shape and coloration, and ants of widely dissimilar appearance and habits."

Tropical Trees

"Among the more important and conspicuous trees of these 'tropical forests are mahogany, rosewood, Spanish cedar, castal, celbas, rubber, palms of many species, guayacan, logwood, brazilwood, palo blanco, the casahuate and divi-divi trees, the 'zapote chico,' from which chicle is extracted, 'zapote prieto,' wild fig, myrtles, 'barbados' and many of the types already mentioned in connection with the sub-tropical zone. Of the 114 species of trees and cabinet-woods, 17 of oil-bearing plants, and over 60 of medicinal plants and dyewoods indigenous to Mexico, by far the larger part are represented in the *tierras calientes*. Among the well-known forest products of this zone are arrowroot, jalap, 'pecuanilla,' sarsaparilla, rubber, orchids and a great variety of gums."

Plants, and Plant Products

"Of the economic plants and products of Mexico the list is surprisingly long and interesting. The cereals, fruits and vegetables of Europe have been introduced and some of them have done well. Wheat is widely cultivated and a considerable part of the population depend upon it for their bread. Indian corn, which is believed to have had its origin in Mexico, also provides food for a large part of the population. 'Tunas' or cactus fruit, red peppers, 'zapotes' (the fruit of various trees), 'arrayan,' 'chuelas' or Mexican plums, guavas, 'huamuchil,' tamarinds, 'aguacates,' bananas, plantains, 'papas,' apples, grapes, oranges, lemons, limes, granadillas, chirimoyas, mangoes, coconuts, 'morcillas,' manioc, olives, gourds and melons are among the fruits of the country, and rice, wheat, Indian corn, beans, 'yams,' sweet potatoes, onions and tomatoes are among its better known food products. 'The food of the common people is chiefly made up of Indian corn, beans, red peppers and tomatoes. There are about fifty known species of beans in Mexico and Central America, and probably a dozen species of red peppers, which are used both in seasoning and in making chili sauce. The 'tomato' mentioned in the *Phytologia Mexicana*, sometimes called the 'strawberry tomato' and the Mexican 'ground-cherry' which is used with red peppers to make chili sauce. The common potato, of which wild varieties are found, is not commonly used as a vegetable, but as a flavoring for soups and other dishes."

The Marvellous Flora

"No brief description can adequately portray the marvellous variety and magnificence of the flora of the *tierras calientes*. This forest is not composed of one of a few dominating species, as in the cold temperate zone, but of countless genera and species closely interwoven together—a confused mass of giant trees, lianas and epiphytes struggling to reach the sunlight. This struggle for existence has completely changed the habits of some plants, turning the palm and the cactus into climbers, and even some normal species into 'epiphytes.'"

Manufactures

Although usually described as a non-manufacturing country, Mexico meets a great part of its home demand for manufactured goods, where the raw material can be produced in the country.

Brown, or muscovado sugar (called 'Panela' by the natives), is still made by primitive methods all over the country. This product is largely consumed in the rural districts.

An important branch of the textile industry is the manufacture of 'serapes' (called 'ponchos' in other parts of Spanish America), a blanket slit in the centre for the head to pass through and worn in place of a coat by men of the lower classes.

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